


To Whom Does The Future Belong?



An Address Delivered at a Symposium

April 6, 1941

at the Brooklyn Academy of Music

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Published by

The Committee for the Preservation of the Jews

381 VAN SICLEN AVENUE, BROOKLYN, N. Y.

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SFC 1297

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The following address was delivered by Harry Jaton at the Symposium.

1. In the Bible, Koheleth tells us: In much wisdom is much grief, and he who increases knowledge increases sorrow. This truth implies the correlative opposite truth, namely: in much grief is much wisdom, and he who increases sorrow increases knowledge. Existence is so constituted that for everything we get from existence we must pay an equivalent, and the equivalent we must pay in coins of work, struggle and suffering. We must work for knowledge, we must struggle for understanding, and we must suffer for wisdom. Only through suffering do men learn wisdom. And so it comes to pass that in days of prosperity and success - before through suffering men learned wisdom - they naively believed that they are the masters; they can freely determine their lives, their existence, history and the future. Then they confidently plan and scheme to realize aims and ambitions. Then they do not ask, to whom does the future belong; for then they are certain that the future belongs to them. But in days of adversity and failure, when the plans and schemes turn out to be illusions, the aims and ambitions are frustrated, and through suffering men learned wisdom, they then discover that they are not the masters; they cannot and do not determine their life, their existence, history and the future. Then they begin humbly to ask: to whom does the future belong? And so it also comes to pass that now, when the human world has become an Armageddon: nations, states and empires are being destroyed, the human race goes through a severe and bloody ordeal, the earth is drunk with human blood and tears, the future is dark and uncertain, and through suffering men learned wisdom - now men begin to ask: to whom does the future belong? And we are here to find the answer to the question.
2. My answer to the question presupposes the following. First, the question - to whom does the future belong - implies that not to all does the future belong. If the future belonged to all, there would be no reason for the question. Second, we are not concerned about the remote future; we are concerned about the proximate future - the future which may belong to us, our children and our grandchildren. Third, men can no more determine the nature and the course of the future than they can determine the natures and the courses of the stars and the planets: they are all determined by a power infinite and eternal over which men have no control. Therefore it is not given to men to determine what the future shall be so as to be certain that it belongs to them; men must find out what the future will be and to whom it belongs. Fourth, men are not born with an inalienable right to the future. That the future may belong to men, they must by work, struggle and suffering earn the right to the future. Finally, the future is not an abstraction, it is not empty time; the future means future existence, and to mankind the future means the future social conditions of existence. Without the social conditions of existence there is for mankind neither existence nor future. That the future may belong to men, they must by work, struggle and suffering earn the right to the social conditions of existence which the future inevitably brings. Therefore the answer to the question - to whom does the future belong - is this: the future belongs to him who is ready, able and determined by work, struggle and suffering to earn the right to the social conditions of existence which the future will inevitably bring. On the other hand, the future does not belong to him who refuses or is unable by work, struggle and suffering to earn the right to the social conditions of existence which the future will inevitably bring. Many are

called, but few are chosen.

3. What social conditions of existence will the future inevitably bring? To understand the answer to this question, we must first understand the nature of the social conditions of existence. The social conditions of existence consist of a mode of production and a social order. All other living beings can exist on the free bounty of nature, but men, to exist, must produce the means of life. To produce the means of life, men must cooperate with one another, and they must enter with one another into definite social and property relations. The way men cooperate with one another to produce the means of life constitutes the mode of production; the social and the property relations into which men enter with one another constitute the social order. The social order rests on the mode of production and must correspond with it. Between the social order and the mode of production there is a fundamental difference. The mode of production is dynamic, active, creative, revolutionary and progressive. The mode of production constantly undergoes a revolution and development of the forces, the means and the processes of production. Therefore the mode of production is inherently revolutionary and progressive. On the other hand, the social order is static, passive, conservative and reactionary; it resists any revolutionary change, for a revolutionary change implies a revolutionary change in the social relations, in the property relations, and in the social position of the privileged classes. Therefore, the social order is inherently conservative and reactionary. So long as the mode of production is free to function and further to develop, so long the social order resting on the mode of production will exist. But when the social order becomes a fetter on the mode of production and a hindrance to its free function and further development, then the mode of production revolts against the social order, the social order is retired from the stage of history, and a new social order is brought out which permits the free function and further development of the mode of production. Have men anything to say about the mode of production and the social order? Within the limited time before me I cannot take up for consideration the age-old problem: do men make history, or does history make men? But for the present purpose it will suffice to state that the revolutionary progress of the mode of production and its effect on the social order are as much beyond the control of men as are the revolutionary movement of the earth around the sun and its effect on the seasons.

4. The present private capitalist social order became a fetter on the mode of production and a hindrance to its free function and further development. The present private capitalist social order cannot solve the problem of unemployed labor and unemployed capital - a problem which became ever more acute, ever more impossible of solution on the basis of private capitalism, and ever more dangerous. The present private capitalist social order was compelled to curtail production, to destroy products, to hold back inventions and improvements, and to arrest the development of the mode of production. The mode of production revolted against the present private capitalist social order. Men, men, take up arms - the present private capitalist social order was counted, it was weighed in the balance, it was found wanting, and it was decreed that it should be retired from the stage of history. A social order does not retire from the stage of history peacefully and honorably. Therefore a social order is forcibly retired from the stage of history it will challenge to mortal combat the new social order that comes to take

its place. This mortal combat manifests itself in revolutionary wars. The present revolutionary world war is a continuation of the revolutionary world war that started in 1914 - it is one revolutionary world war. It is not a war between nations, it is not a war between states, it is not a war between empires, it is not a war between the have-nots and the haves, it is not a war between dictatorship and democracy; it is a life and death struggle between the present dying, private capitalist social order and the new social order that comes to take its place. The outcome of the struggle is already determined: neither the Axis powers nor the democratic nations will be victorious; victorious will be the new social order. And the nations, in self-preservation - will accept the new social order.

5. What will be the new social order? Wars and revolutions may destroy social orders, nations, states, empires, cultures and civilizations - they have a destructive effect on the technical progress of the mode of production. On the contrary, wars and revolutions have a constructive and stimulating effect on the technical progress of the mode of production. As Marx pointed out, and as universal history and universal experience show, the technical progress of the mode of production is far greater and more rapid during wars and revolutions than it is during peace times. It is therefore certain that the technical progress of the mode of production at the end of the present revolutionary world war will be far greater than it was before this war. The technical progress of the mode of production gives rise to an integration and organization of ever greater masses of the forces, the means and the processes of production. Thus, primitive, puny and scattered production became integrated and organized into cooperative handicraft production; cooperative handicraft production becomes integrated and organized into cooperative machine production; cooperative machine production became integrated and organized into cooperative systems of mass production; so that in one single system of mass production are integrated and organized hundreds of thousands of workers and infinite masses of the means and the processes of production. The time arrived for the vast systems of mass production to be integrated and organized into national systems of mass production. But who can bring out national systems of mass production? The capitalists cannot achieve this, because the capitalists can function and have a reason for existence only in a system of individual competitive production. But national systems of mass production exclude individual competitive production. On the other hand, the working class are not yet prepared to perform this gigantic task. The only ones that can bring out national systems of mass production are the states. Therefore history now calls on the states to take in hand the mode of production, to integrate and organize it into national systems of mass production. But it is the working class that produce. Therefore history now calls on the states to cooperate with the working class, to eliminate the capitalists, and to establish state capitalism.

6. What is state capitalism? State capitalism is a social order in which the states are the capitalists. Capitalism rests on the exploitation of the working class. In private capitalism, the capitalists exploit the working class; in state capitalism, the states exploit the working class. But state capitalism is the beginning of socialism and the emancipation of the working class. It is the historic function of state capitalism to prepare the ground for socialism, and itself to be transformed into socialism. In democracies resting on private capitalism, the working class had certain political rights, but they never had po-

litical power, and they never functioned politically on the historic stage. But in state capitalism, because they cooperate with the states, for the first time in history the working class acquire political power and begin to function politically on the historic stage. Second, throughout the past the working class produced the means of life, but they never organized and determined production and distribution. But in state capitalism, because they cooperate with the states, for the first time in history the working class begin to organize and determine production and distribution. In proportion as the working class acquire political power and function politically on the historic stage, in proportion as they learn to organize and determine production and distribution, and in proportion as the mode of production becomes integrated and organized internationally, in that proportion the ground is prepared for socialism, and state capitalism is transformed into socialism. What will follow socialism does not concern us now.

7. When the states, in addition to their political power, also acquire economic power, they become supreme and absolute, and their rule becomes a dictatorship. State capitalism and dictatorship are an evil to the capitalists, because they eliminate the capitalists; but state capitalism and dictatorship are a benefit to the working class. First, in state capitalism, because the working class cooperate with the states, they acquire economic security - something which they never had, and which in private capitalism they could not hope to have. And economic security is not a trifle. For this economic security the working class will not have to give up political rights and civil liberties, because the political power and the economic security which they will acquire will give them even more political rights and civil liberties than they ever possessed in democracies resting on private capitalism. Second, throughout the past the working class were compelled to submit to dictatorship; they were always dictated by masters, oppressors, exploiters and capitalists; but they never participated in that dictatorship. But in state capitalism, because they cooperate with the states, the working class participate in the dictatorship. A dictatorship in which we participate is not dictatorship to us. A dictatorship in which the working class participate is not dictatorship to them. This is the reason why the working class readily cooperate with the states to eliminate the capitalists, to abolish private capitalism and to establish state capitalism and dictatorship. This is true, not only in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and other countries, it is also true in democratic England and democratic United States. This is the reason why the working class in this country cooperate with the state to eliminate the capitalists, to abolish private capitalism and to establish state capitalism and dictatorship. We are already more than waist-deep in state capitalism and dictatorship. In due time we shall be over head in state capitalism and dictatorship. Naive Americans believe that the economic and political changes which now take place in the United States are of a temporary nature to meet a temporary emergency; and, when the emergency will pass, the economic and political conditions in this country will return to their former state. This is a childish illusion. We are facing, not a temporary emergency; we are facing a permanent, historic and revolutionary transformation of society - a transformation of private capitalism into state capitalism. State capitalism will be the permanent social order of society in this country as in all other countries, until state capitalism is transformed into socialism.

6. The character of state capitalism will change with the development

of state capitalism and the development of the working class. In proportion as state capitalism conquers for itself the world terrain, and retires private capitalism from the stage of history; in proportion as state capitalism spreads over the earth and becomes international; in proportion as the working class acquire political power and function politically on the historic stage; in proportion as the working class organize and determine production and distribution; in proportion as the mode of production becomes integrated and organized internationally - in that proportion will state capitalism become humane, democratic and rational, and in that proportion state capitalism will be transformed into socialism. Even in Soviet Russia, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy state capitalism will become humane, democratic, rational and socialistic. In the United States, state capitalism will be established in the American way and will have the American character. Just as in the American way we established universal militarism, we abolished the tradition against the third term, we assumed the terrific burden of helping England and to prepare ourselves for a struggle against the Axis power, and we invested President Roosevelt with dictatorial power; so in the American way we will eliminate the capitalists, we will abolish private capitalism, and we will establish state capitalism. Then state capitalism has been established in this country, it will reveal itself to be as superior to private capitalism as private capitalism was superior to feudalism. Mankind must go through, and they will inevitably go through, state capitalism and dictatorship to become prepared for socialism, and socialism is absolutely inevitable. The question - to whom does the future belong - is now answered. The future belongs to him who is ready, able and determined to accept state capitalism, and by work, struggle and suffering to earn the right to live in the new social order. On the other hand, the future does not belong to him who refuses or is unable to accept state capitalism, and by work, struggle and suffering to earn the right to live in the new social order. Many are called, but few are chosen.

196485B

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Symposium

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Long ago men of thought perceived the Ultimate Destiny of Mankind: they called that destiny, the Kingdom of Heaven - a kingdom of light, reason, knowledge, understanding, peace and happiness. This was a perception, not of philosophy, but of life itself. The kingdom of heaven is not somewhere removed from us by time and space and which, the moment we reach it, we can enter and fully enjoy; but the kingdom of heaven is about us and within us. It always existed. But the term, the kingdom of heaven, has lost its meaning. What was once meant by the kingdom of heaven, each succeeding generation called by a different name. Liberty, democracy, socialism, and communism, are only the steps by which mankind will reach the human society.

Is that Human Society inevitable? All past human progress and achievements were steps and stages of the Kingdom of Heaven, and each step or stage brought its own immediate reward.

The reader is urged to procure a copy of this lecture which will be printed next week.